

LOUIS BEGLEY

P. O. Box 159
Sagaponack, NY 11962
(until August 30th)

August 7, 2005

Dear Dan,

I cannot thank your son Michael enough (although I've tried) for sending *Secrets*, or you for the affectionate and moving inscription.

Your book, which I have not finished but read in bed and during every moment I can steal from writing mine, is an extraordinary revelation. First of all, I had no idea that you were superb writer, with a novelist's sense for the narrative. I find that I am impatient to get back to your story (we are in Vietnam now, driving over roads no American adviser has been on for a year or more). Second, you are disarmingly and beautifully honest – or come across as such. Third, you present that dreary story, which alas we are now reliving, with unchallengeable authority. Bravo! The only excuse I have for not having read you sooner is the sad truth that what between my law practice and my scribbling I've had very little time for other people's work. (I became of counsel to my firm, i. e. a non-person, a year ago, so life is easier now.)

John McNaughton taught me agency at the Law School. I got to know him a little. Your portrait of him is first rate.

There is an odd parallel in our lives. I too was deluded about Vietnam. I made it easy for myself to be deluded by moving to Paris in May 1965, so that when the momentous decisions that you describe were made, I was up to my neck in a very French life and an Algérie française milieu for which what we were doing in Indochina was a sort of Walter Mitty dream. I don't think that I came to my senses before 1967.

You and I got our wires crossed two? three? years ago, when we agreed to meet for lunch and one or both of made a mistake about when it was to be. When you come to New York again, will you give me another chance? I hardly ever get to California.

Yours ever,

Louis

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after 19 Sept.
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